[63]

Ministers and Officials of the Court of the Mogho Naba

644 645 Ministers. (a) Ouidi Naba (literally, "chief of the horses," or superintendent of His Majesty's stables). In the old days the Ouidi Naba had the duty of choosing the color and kind of horse suitable for the Mogho Naba. He usually had charge of the horses of deceased chiefs.

202 644 If a kombéré (canton chief) owned horses during his lifetime, upon his death one of them is sent to the Mogho Naba in Ouagadougou as bearer of the sad news. Branches of the tahnga (karite [or shea] tree), wound with white rope, are tied to the horse's tail.

[64] The horse thus presented to the Mogho Naba is then handed over to one of the representatives of the Ouidi Naba who, after cutting loose the branches with a knife and leaving them in the courtyard of the Mogho Naba, leads the animal to Ouidin [section of the Ouidi Naba].

Unless the Mogho Naba gives the horse to someone, the Ouidi Naba is free to dispose of it.

645 (b) Larrhallé Naba, second minister of the Mogho Naba. Formerly he accompanied the Tansoba or Tampsoba to war.

In the section where the Larrhallé Naba now lives, there were once enormous trees whose leaves were constantly astir. When he was made a minister, the Larrhallé Naba said that he wished to dwell at the place "where the leaves on the trees are always astir" (tisse vand'sin y a lag, lag zighin wan). From this came the name of Larrhallé, which designates the section.

(c) Gounga Naba, third minister (1). His section stands in a

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1. Originally the Gounga Naba was the prime minister, and the title was his by right since he was a companion of Naba Oubri. One day, as he was attending to a natural need, he met a very handsome young man and offered his friendship to him; the latter accepted. Later he presented the boy to Naba Oubri who adopted him, settled him at court, and put him in charge of the royal stables. The Gounga Naba then said

The Kombéré: Death, Enthronement

631 763 202 Death. Upon the death of a kombéré two representatives in mourning are sent from the canton to Ouagadougou to deliver the sad news to the Mogho Naba. The envoys are entrusted with a horse or a sheep, depending on the importance of the naba. Tanga branches are tied to the animal's tail (see Ouidi Naba, Chapter 4).

[136] When the first emissary reaches the courtyard of the Mogho Naba, he sits down, taking care to place one hand on the ground and stretching out his arm. Since the very sight of the horse is significant, even before any explanation is offered, the Zusoaba enters the house of the Mogho Naba and comes out again bearing a gourd of water with flour in it (zom kom) which he pours on the envoy's arm.

The horse is then handed over to a representative of the Ouidi Naba who removes the branches and leads the animal to Widhin [Ouidin].

The Zusoaba takes back the gourd, and it is only then that the Ouidi Naba says to the Mogho Naba: "Naba zagl yka sambga le tongalamé (Chief So-and-So has been stricken with such-and-such an illness and has succumbed)." It should be added that before going to see the Mogho Naba, the envoys first inform the ministers of the death of the kombéré.

631 766 The Mogho Naba asks a few appropriate questions and sends the representatives to prepare the kouré. On the day of the ceremony, the Nabitienga (eldest son of the deceased chief) has large quantities of beer and saghbo prepared and sheep and cattle killed to feed the people gathered in great numbers for the occasion.

The house is circled, as was described for the Mogho Naba.

[145] (a) Koupéogo (kouré basket). The koupéogo is a basket, artistically made, into which is put the foutou (clothing of the deceased), [137] koursi (trousers), his pougla (red fez), his néoda (slippers), the zandé (club), and the wed'zouré (horse's tail). This basket is laid upon a pé'gaongo (skin of a sheep) in the zaongo (antechamber).

One of the sisters of the Nabitienga, usually the eldest daughter of the deceased, carries the péogo outside and seats herself at the place where the dead chief held his daily audiences (guéré). The benda, liunsé, and gangando drums are played together, and then

3. Finally, a third lot, composed of young girls and young boys, was distributed among the warriors and put into their charge. The boys will be employed until further notice as grooms to the warriors; later on, those who prove themselves useful and docile will be kept. The others will be sold at the first opportunity. The girls will be given in marriage to warriors who distinguish themselves.[24]

The military campaigns of the Mossi, in contrast to their slave-raiding expeditions, appear to have been well organized. When the Mogho Naba felt that a war was necessary, he summoned his five provincial ministers and the Tansoba to a parley. If war was decided upon, the Tansoba was given full charge of all operations. This man, chosen from a hereditary clan of warriors who lived in a village called Tansob'tenga in Sapone district, was listed among the Mogho Naba's courtiers but seldom appeared at court unless war was imminent. His duties as chief warrior were considered so dangerous that he constantly sought out religious practitioners for supernatural aid. Nevertheless, a war minister who was good and brave was not expected to live very long. If he did live to become gray-haired, the other courtiers made fun of him by pretending that his graying head could only be the result of his having carried a sheep captured in warfare on his head as a present to the ruler.

Once given a mandate for war, the Tansoba collected his magico-religious apparatus and prepared the requisite sacrifices. He then asked the provincial ministers to notify the district chiefs to assemble with their warriors under the leadership of the local Tansobadamba, who were often members of the Tansoba clan. When the district chiefs received this notice, they beat their *zongagondo* (war drums), and the local administrators sent orders for men to the village chiefs. The village chiefs, in turn, beat their war drums to summon their noble cavalrymen and commoner foot soldiers, who came armed with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and clubs, with or without iron tips. The tips of the sharp weapons were often covered with a vegetable poison derived from a shrub of the Strophanthus species. Some of the men also carried guns after firearms were introduced among the Mossi from the desert region and from the coast. Many carried rawhide shields.

As soon as the village contingents had assembled and had gathered their provisions, they marched to the district centers. Then they proceeded either to the place of battle or to Ouagadougou. In the latter case, they became part of the royal army and were joined by the forces of those princes who were prepared to honor their obligation to the Mogho Naba. For example, when the French invaded Ouagadougou in 1896, the Boulsa Dim sent his prime minister "at the head of an army to aid Mogho Naba

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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went to the home of his Samande Naba, the next to the Gounghin ward, then to Baghin, and subsequently to the homes of other officials. He could not remain long at one place for fear that the ancestors might find him. Every morning, however, when the cock's crow heralded the ancestors' departure, he returned to his palace.

The principal part of the Basgha ceremony was performed on the night when the crescent moon appeared. On that night more than any other, the ruler had to seek refuge elsewhere, because the ancestors visited the palace to accept the sacrifices offered to them by the Pughtiema with the help of the Baloum Naba and the chief eunuch of the harem. The exact nature of this ceremony is unknown, but it is known that the Baloum Naba used the sacred namtibo along with animals and millet-flour water provided by the Pughtiema and the chief eunuch for propitiatory sacrifices to the ancestors. The aim of these sacrifices was to induce the ancestors to grant good crops, health, happiness, and children to their descendants, and to "increase the force of the namtibo."[1] At cock's crow the Bendere Naba sprinkled a flour infusion called *gningmassem* ("water of health") on the palace courtyard so that the ruler might walk upon it when he returned. The Mogho Naba was greeted with drumbeats and escorted to the palace gate. His entry into the antechamber marked the close of this ceremony, and the people retired until later in the day.

The elaborate public ceremony of the Basgha took place in mid-morning. The ministers and important officials, clad in ceremonial garb, arrived at the palace quite early. When the Mogho Naba appeared, the Bendere Naba recited the official genealogy, starting with Ouedraogo and Oubri and ending with elaborate praises of the current ruler. The ministers and their entourage then saluted the Mogho Naba and wished him *Ne tarbo*, which means a happy and prosperous new year for himself and the country. He, in turn, took advantage of this occasion to give many presents to his retinue, and his wives distributed huge amounts of food and drink to the assembly until everyone was satiated. Then all the officials except the Bendere Naba and his group paid homage to the Mogho Naba and departed. The musicians remained at court most of the day, beating their drums and singing praises to their sovereign and his illustrious ancestors. The royal pages kept them well supplied with food and beer, and now and again during the day the ruler sent them gifts among which robes were often included. Whenever the drummers received a gift, they slipped into a rhythmic pattern that signified: *Tompaongo, Wend'kaouss' Naba niore, Wenne wilig vinre,* or, "We bow in thanksgiving for your gift. May God give the ruler long life. May God grant us to be alive next year so that we may do this again." The